

## Message Text

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ACTION DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 IO-13

LAB-04 SS-15 /048 W

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R 071955Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1496

INFO AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 5380

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, ELAB, BL

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS ACTIVITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
IN BOLIVIA

REF: LAPAZ 5013

1. POL/ECOM COUNSELOR HAD LONG DISCUSSION WITH GOB SUB-SECRETARY OF PUBLIC HEALTH GASTOOOPONCE, WHO IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF BOLIVIAN RED CROSS, AND LEONARD ISLER, REGIONAL DELEGATE, INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, WHO IS IN BOLIVIA ON A ROUTINE BI-ANNUAL INSPECTION. ISLER COINCIDENTALLY ARRIVED IN BOLIVIA A FEW DAYS AFTER THE ARRESTS OF APPROXIMATELY 150 MINE LABOR LEADERS AND MINEWORKERS SO HE HAS HAD A CHANCE TO VISIT ALL OF THESE PRISONERS AS WELL AS OTHER POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA. ISLER SAID THAT ON HIS VISITS TO BOLIVIA HE ALWAYS RECEIVES FULL COOPERATION FROM GOB AUTHORITIES AND HAS HAD FREE AND OPEN ACCESS TO ALL PRISONERS WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF PRISON OFFICIALS. HE OPINED, IN FRONT OF PONCE, THAT THERE IS NO SYSTEMATIC MISTREATMENT OR TORTURE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA OF THE NATURE OF CHILE OR URUGUAY, ALTHOUGH PRISONERS OCCASIONALLY RECEIVE ROUGH TREATMENT UNDER INTERROGATION.

2. DR. PONCE EXPLAINED THAT THE BOLIVIAN RED CROSS HAS REGULAR ACCESS TO ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PROVIDES FOOD,  
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CLOTHING, SUNDRIES, AND FACILITATES COMMUNICATIONS WITH

FAMILIES, ETC. PONCE SAID THAT FOLLOWING THE MILITARY OCCUPATION OF MINING AREAS, HE REQUESTED AND RECEIVED PERMISSION TO VISIT THE OCCUPIED MINES AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE RED CROSS AND THAT HE VISITED MOST MAJOR MINE AREAS AND SPOKE WITH FAMILIES AND MINeworkERS AND VISITED HOMES. HE SAID THAT WHILE GOB FORCES DID DETAIN AND INTERROGATE MANY PEOPLE FOR SHORT PERIODS, THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF SERIOUS MISTREATMENT OR HARSH ACTS. SINCE THEN BOTH PONCE AND ISLER HAVE VISITED ALL FOUR PRISONS WHERE THE MINE WORKER DETAINEES HAVE BEEN HELD.

3. ISLER LATER TELEPHONED POL/ECOM COUNSELOR AND SAID THAT THERE IS ONE CASE OF TWO MISSING PERSONS, APPARENTLY MEMBERS OF AN EXTREME LEFTIST ORGANIZATION, AND THAT HE INTENDS TO RAISE THIS WITH THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR IN HIS EXIT INTERVIEW. THE PERSONS CONCERNED DISAPPEARED BEFORE THE RECENT TROUBLES WITH THE MINeworkERS. ISLER REITERATED HIS VIEW, HOWEVER, THAT THERE IS NONE OF THE SYSTEMATIC MISTREATMENT OF PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA WHICH EXISTS IN NEARBY COUNTRIES.

4. THE GOB HAS NOT OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED HOW MANY MINeworkERS ARE STILL BEING HELD. IT ANNOUNCED THE EXILING TO CHILE OF 25 OF THOSE IN PRISON ON JULY 5. APPROXIMATELY 25 OTHERS HAD EARLIER BEEN EXILED. IT APPEARS THEN THAT PERHAPS SOME 100 MINeworkERS REMAIN UNDER ARREST, WITH CHURCH OFFICIALS AND OTHER PRIVATE PARTIES CONTINUING TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT FOR THEIR RELEASE.

5. DR. PONCE ASKED THE POL/ECOM COUNSELOR WHETHER, IN LIGHT OF THE USG'S FORCEFULLY STATED INTERESTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS, WE WOULD BE WILLING TO ASSIST IN FURNISHING THE MODERNIZATION OF BOLIVIAN PRISON FACILITIES. SPECIFICALLY, HE MENTIONED THE GOB'S PLAN TO ESTABLISH A MODERN PRISON PLANT ON THE ALTIPLANO NEAR LA PAZ, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE A DRUG REHABILITATION CENTER. HE SAID THAT IT IS STILL IN THE PRELIMINARY STAGES BUT THAT THE GOB MIGHT EVENTUALLY APPROACH THE US FOR ASSISTANCE.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE BEING ADVISED WHETHER THE US HAS ANY PROGRAMS FOR ASSISTING COUNTRIES TECHNICALLY AND FINANCIALLY WITH PRISON IMPROVEMENT,  
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MODERNIZATION AND REFORM.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** HUMAN RIGHTS, REPRESENTATIONAL ACTIVITIES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 07 JUL 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 07 JUL 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <07 JUL 2004 by MartinML>; APPROVED <08 JUL 2004 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
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**TAGS:** SHUM, ELAB, BL, IRC-3, ICRC  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006